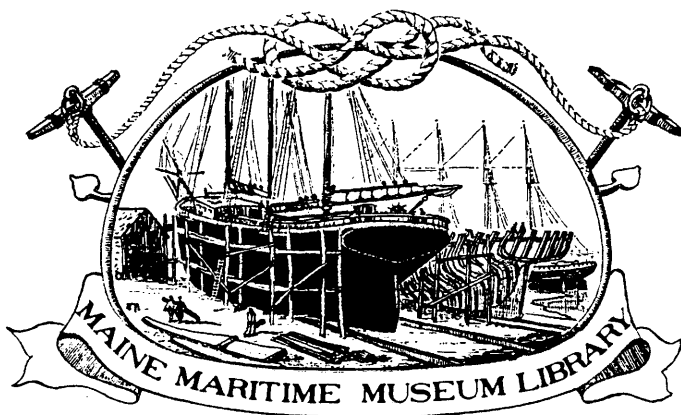


**Maine Maritime Museum Library**  
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**Inventory  
for  
Manuscript Collection  
MS-66**

**Alden Oakum Mill  
Records, 1824-1911  
(bulk dates 1864-1907)**

by  
Elizabeth Singer Maule

May, 1996

Shelf feet: 8  
Number of boxes: 14

This inventory is the product of a grant from the  
**Davis Family Foundation.**

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## **Abstract**

### **Alden Oakum Mill.**

Records, 1824-1911 (bulk dates 1864-1907).

14 boxes (8 shelf feet).

caulking

Mill in Camden, ME, producing oakum for use primarily in

ships or for plumbing.

Collection of account books detailing operation of mill from procurement of old hemp and jute, to processing, to time records of employees, to accounts with customers buying finished product. There are almost no letters. Mill started by Horatio Alden (1800-1872) in Thomaston, ME, in 1824 and moved to Camden about 1842. Operation continued after his death by his son Henry L. Alden (1843-1911). Also includes accounts of Alden's carding mills (operated by son Cyrus G. Alden, ca. 1828-1873), family household accounts, and a few miscellaneous records such as water levels at their dam on the Megunticook River in Camden, HLA's estate account, and tallies of woodcock and partridge shot.

Gift of Ray Alden, great grandson of Horatio Alden, 1988, G88.96.

Finding aid available in repository folder level control.

Added entries: Alden, Horatio (1800-1872) Alden, Henry L. (1843-1911) Alden, Cyrus G. (ca. 1828-1873) Oakum Mills and mill-work Hunting Labor Camden (ME) Thomaston (ME) Dams Megunticook River (ME).

## **Restrictions**

There are no restrictions on the use of this collection.

## **Acquisition**

This collection was given to Maine Maritime Museum by Ray Alden, great grandson of the mill's founder, Horatio Alden (1800-1872). The materials had been in the family house in Camden, ME, until they were given to the Museum in 1988.

## **Foreword**

The processing of this collection and the preparation of the inventory were made possible by a grant from the Davis Family Foundation, Falmouth, ME.

## Historical Note

Horatio Alden was born in Union, ME, in 1800, the son of Ebenezer and Patience (Gilmore) Alden, who came to Union from Duxbury, MA, in 1791. About 1824 Horatio moved to Thomaston, ME and opened a cloth-dressing and wool-carding mill. He also apparently manufactured the first machine-made oakum in the country about this same time. He later built a woolen mill in Warren, ME, with a Mr. Allen. In 1842 he exchanged his Warren property for the "Hodgman privileges" on the Megunticook River in Camden, ME.

The Megunticook River rises from a nearby lake of the same name and drops about 200 feet on its short run to the harbor. Along the way there were about eleven mill sites in the middle of the nineteenth century, at least five of which were controlled by Horatio Alden. The farthest upstream was his block factory, Horatio Alden & Co., which featured a special machine invented in 1854 by neighboring mill owner D. Knowlton to produce deadeyes from *lignum vitae*. In 1859 the mill was averaging \$20,000 per year. At one time this factory employed forty people.

At the next site down river, Alden operated his oakum factory. Oakum is a substance used for caulking the seams of wooden vessels, wooden tanks, water pipes, and the decks of some steel and iron vessels. It is sometimes composed of old hemp ropes which are untwisted, pulled into loose fibers and then treated with pine tar. The highest grade oakum, however, is made of new hemp fibers from Russia, Italy, or India rather than from old ones. The finished product is marketed in bales or coiled in rope form.

The original oakum factory buildings were destroyed by fire in 1845. Knowlton built the replacement machinery, which included wet and dry breakers and a finisher capable of picking about 200 lbs. of oakum per day and of producing about 2,400 bales per year. This operation may have been known as H. Alden & Co. After Horatio's death in 1872 his son Henry L. Alden (1843-1911) operated the mill until about 1907, when it was apparently closed.

Two sites farther down stream was the bakery of Horton & Alden, which produced an average of three barrels per day of ships' bread, ginger bread, and crackers. The "Camden Bread," as it was called, was delivered all over the area by carriage.

Alden's last mill site was actually below the dam at the edge of the harbor and was a very desirable spot because vessels could lay alongside. This mill was the only one on the river built of brick and was operated at least in part by Alden's son Cyrus G. Alden as a woolen factory. There were 300 spindles in the factory in 1859 capable of producing 36,500 yards per year of flannels and other woolen yard goods, as well as 15,650 lbs. of yarn. The mill also did custom carding.

Alden may also have been involved in saw and grist mills at various times along the same river. In 1862 he purchased another site below the oakum factory and erected a building which eventually became the Knox Woolen Mill and with Albert Johnson manufactured the first paper makers' endless felts in the country. Four years later he helped finance the Camden Anchor Works, started by his sons Horatio E. and William G. Alden. For a while this was the biggest anchor manufacturer in the country, and it employed many people. It was sold in 1901 and combined with Knox engines in Rockland, ME.

It is no wonder that Horatio Alden was called the "Father of Camden's Manufacturing Industries." He had great executive ability and was very successful, apparently amassing quite a fortune. His house was at 46 Main St., Camden.

Alden was a Democrat and was elected the first Judge of Probate in newly organized Knox County. He served from 1861-1865. He was also involved in other political activities.

Alden had two wives, Sarah and Polly G. Bachelder/ Bachelor, both the daughters of Nathan Bachelder/ Bachelor. There is conflicting evidence about which he married first, but she died in 1835 and he married her sister that same year. Their children were

John M. (1825-1858) m. 1845 Sabra R. Ulmer moved to California

?Salina m. Asa Andrews

Cyrus G. (ca. 1828-1873) m. Adelaide A. Ogier operated woolen mill in

Camden died of consumption in Key West, FL

Caroline/ Carolyn A. (1829-1859) [Arravesta C.?)

Nathaniel A. (1830/2-1859)

Horatio E. (1834-1877) Camden Anchor Works

Benjamin H. B. (1838-?)

William G. (1840-?) Camden Anchor Works

Henry L. (1841-1842)

Henry L. (1843-?) takes over oakum mill

Sarah B. (1845-?) m. 1865 Benjamin C. Adams

Charles F. L. (1849-1850)

Horatio Alden died in Camden on April 19, 1872. His wife Polly [?] died in 1883 at the age of 75.

## Scope and Content

The records of the Alden Oakum Mill as preserved in this collection are almost entirely account books there are only two or three letters and a few loose items. The books can be divided into categories as follows: Oakum Factory records which detail the operation of the factory--income, debts, stock on hand time records which list employees' names and the amount of time worked on a weekly basis as well as the number of bales produced per day by the entire crew cash books which list the cash taken in and expended each day day books which detail the day to day income and expenses of what appears to be a combination of Alden's businesses (oakum, bakery, carding, rigging, anchor repairs, groceries, etc.) and customers' account books which keep running tallies of balances held by many purchasers of oakum and by some suppliers of goods and services as well these also contain some records of employees' time worked. In each category there is a fairly long and complete run of records, with the exception of the Oakum Factory records which have a gap from about 1872 to 1885.

There are some other records as well, and it is not at all clear who kept these in some cases the handwriting matches that of the oakum records and in other instances it does not. The majority of these additional records relate to Horatio Alden's first carding mill in Thomaston and date from about 1824-1828. These include a few records from a general store which *may* have been in St. Albans, ME. The remainder are for Alden's second carding mill operation in Camden which was managed by his son Cyrus G. Alden until the latter's death in 1873 who managed the mill after that is unknown. All together there is a good run of records from about 1866 to 1889. The accounts for the Camden mill are scattered throughout the oakum record books, and their locations have been noted in the Container List.

Finally, scattered through the oakum record books are some family accounts, primarily for household expenses. These include Henry L. Alden's estate, 1911, and tallies of woodcock and partridge shot by a family member over several years these often list the locations of the shootings as well. In all cases the locations of these extra accounts have been noted in the Container List. The collection represents more of the family business empire than might be thought from the title.

All records are in good condition and are remarkably legible. Four volumes are over sized and are stored separately in Boxes 13 and 14.

## Outline

Series I. Carding Mill, [Thomaston, ME?]

Series II. Oakum Mill, Camden, ME

- A. Oakum Factory
- B. Time records
- C. Cash books
- D. Day books
- E. Customers' account books

## Container List

### Series I. Carding Mill, [Thomaston, ME?]

Box 1 Folder 1 Day book, 1824-1828 [inc. accounts from a general store,  
1824-1827 O.S. and removed to Box 13 loose  
papers from volume in this folder s.a. Box 1/2 2/4, 5, 7,  
3/1 4/6]

### Series II. Alden Oakum Mill, Camden, ME

2	Oakum Factory, Balance sheets (bound), 1867 [inc. cash accounts, 1868-1872 and carding mill accounts, 1867-1870 s.a. Box 2/7 4/2, 6]
3	1891-1903
4	1903-1908 [inc. cash accounts, 1909-1911 which are probably household or personal record of woodcock and partridge shot, 1910, and information on Remington guns]
5	loose items removed from Vol. in Box 4/1 [inc. map of <i>Boston &amp; Northern and Old Colony Street Railway Co.'s Systems</i> , undated]
6	Time records (bound), 1864-1878 [s.a. Box 5/4-12/1]
7	1878-1891
8	loose items removed from Vol. in Box 1/7
2	1
	1892-1902
	2
	loose items removed from Vol. in Box 2/1
	3
	1903-1907
4	Cash books, 1871-1878 [s.a. Box 1/2, 4 inc. carding mill accounts, 1871-1878]
5	1878-1885 [inc. carding mill accounts, 1879-1884 and [carding?] mill accounts, 1881-1883 also includes costs for excavating a cellar, undated]
6	loose items removed from Vol. in Box 2/5 [inc. pay record on letterhead, 188-]
7	1885-1886 [inc. Oakum Factory accounts, 1886-1890, carding mill accounts, 1885-1886, and Oakum Factory accounts, 1885]
8	loose items removed from Vol. in Box 2/7 [inc. telephone rates]
3	1
	1886-1891 [inc. card draw accounts, 1886-1889 and cash accounts, 1891]
	2
	1892-1897 [inc. water levels at dam, 1893-1898]
	3
	loose items removed from Vol. in Box 2/2 [inc.

letter (request for price quote), 1910]

4 1897-1903 [inc. water levels at dam, 1899-1900]

5 loose items removed from Vol. in Box 3/4

6 1903-1909 [N.B. ca. 1906 these accounts become  
increasingly personal in nature, inc. hunting  
tally of woodcock and partridge, 1904-1905  
roll call of Thursday Morning Poetry Club,  
undated and dimensions of an automobile,  
1908]

7 loose items removed from Vol. in Box 3/6

4 1 Day books, 1849-1862 [O. S. and stored in Box 13]

2 loose items removed from Vol. in Box 4/1, misc.  
oakum accounts, primarily with  
W. W. Currier, 1854-1858 [O. S.  
and stored in Box 13]

3 letters, accounts, shipping invoices,  
ephemera, misc.

4 accounts and minutes [?] of ?

5 accounts for "New bark building at Robbin-  
ston," 1858

6 1865-1867 [inc. carding mill accounts, 1866 mill [oakum?]  
accounts 1866 oakum mill accounts, 1866  
mill [oakum?] accounts, 1867 and cash  
accounts, 1867-1868 O. S. and stored in  
Box 14]

7 loose items removed from Vol. in Box 4/6 [inc.  
list of debts due, 1868]

8 1868-1878 [O. S. and stored in Box 14]

9 1878-1884

10 loose items removed from Vol. in Box 4/9

11 1885-1893

5 1 1893-1902 [inc. account of standing rigging, 1899 and of  
standing rigging in middle of yard, 1899]

2 1902-1908 [inc. Family Cash and Bank Account, 1911  
H. L. Alden Estate Account, 1911 and tally  
of woodcock and partridge shot, 1911]

3 loose items removed from Vol. in Box 5/2

4 Customers' account books, w/ index, 1865-1867 [N. B. Many of  
these account books contain additional time records for em-  
ployees s.a. 1/6-2/3.]

5 loose leaves removed from Vol. in Box 5/4

6 1 1867-1871

2 1871-1885

7 1 1879-1885

2 1886-1889



	3	1889
	4	1890
	5	1891
8	1	1892
	2	1893
	3	1894
	4	1895
9	1	1896
	2	1897
	3	1898
	4	1899
10	1	1900 [inc. household accounts for 1907-1908]
	2	loose items removed from Vol. in Box 10/1
	3	1901
	4	1902
	5	1903 [inc. unidentified plot plan]
	6	loose items removed from Vol. in Box 10/5
11	1	1904
	2	loose items removed from Vol. in Box 11/1
	3	1905
	4	loose items removed from Vol. in Box 11/3
	5	1906
	6	loose items removed from Vol. in Box 11/5
12	1	1907
	2	loose items removed from Vol. in Box 12/1
	3	1908-1910 [entirely household accounts]
13		Oversized volumes removed from Box 1/1 and 4/1 also O. S. folder removed from Box 4/2
14		Oversized volumes removed from Box 4/6 and 4/8

## Added Entries

Accounts  
Administration of estates  
Alden, Cyrus G.  
Alden, Henry L.  
Alden, Horatio  
Alden family  
Architecture, Domestic dwellings  
Camden (ME)  
Currier, W. W.  
Dams  
Hemp trade  
Hunting  
Labor  
Maps  
Masts and rigging  
Megunticook River (ME)  
Mills and mill-work  
Oakum  
Poetry  
Robbinston (ME)  
Shipbuilding--Equipment and supplies  
Shipbuilding--Robbinston (ME)  
Thomaston (ME)  
Thursday Morning Poetry Club